

Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable With Major General Thomas Spoehr, Deputy Commanding General For Support, U.S. Forces-Iraq, Via Teleconference From Iraq Subject: Ongoing Reposture Efforts Time: 12:00 p.m. EDT Date: Thursday, October 13, 2011

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PETTY OFFICER WILLIAM SELBY (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's Blogger's Roundtable for Thursday, October 14th, 2011 (sic\October 13, 2011). My name is Petty Officer William Selby at the Office of Secretary of Defense Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating our call today.

Today, we're honored to have as our guest Major General Thomas W. Spoehr, United States Forces-Iraq, deputy commanding general for support. Major General Spoehr will discuss the ongoing reposture efforts, particularly the redeployment of troops and equipment during the last 90 days of the Security Agreement, which officially began 1 October. He can also speak about the quality of life for troops and questions about USF-I's ability to react to a possible request from the Government of Iraq to extend U.S. troop presence beyond 2011.

A note to the bloggers on the line. As I stated earlier, please remember to place your phone on mute if you are not asking a question. Please remember to clearly state your name and blog or organization in advance of your question, and respect the general's time and keep your questions succinct and to the point.

With that, sir, the floor is yours for an opening statement.

MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS SPOEHR: Thank you. And good afternoon everybody and I appreciate the opportunity to share with you and your extended audiences what your U.S. military folks are doing in Iraq and what we're able to accomplish.

As the moderator said, I'm the U.S. Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general for support. And so what that really means is I assist General Austin, the commander here, with the oversight of sustainment, engineering, personnel functions, communications and all the other support functions which really would tie him down and not allow him

to accomplish the strategic task, like interacting with the Iraqi leaders or the ambassador here.

My specific responsibilities in Operation New Dawn are the successful retrograde of U.S. Forces-Iraq, the transition of existing sites that are currently occupied by U.S. forces to the government of Iraq, or U.S. mission Iraq; to ensure uninterrupted support to U.S. forces, and finally, the responsible stewardship of equipment and property that's been entrusted to U.S. Forces-Iraq. Now I'm going to have a brief statement here, but I just wanted to give you some fast facts, and maybe these will key some questions in your mind.

As you probably know, U.S. forces are engaged in executing our responsibilities under the 2008 bilateral security agreement that states that all U.S. forces will withdraw from Iraq by December 31st, 2011 (sic\2011), and we're on track with those plans. But at the same time I don't want to understate the magnitude of this operation.

Eight years of continuous conflict has resulted in a substantial amount of equipment, supplies, property and personnel still in Iraq, and we'll withdraw with the constant threat of enemy attack and the potential for bad weather, and we're doing so in a deliberate, measured manner, ensuring we protect service members, civilians, contractors, equipment and property, and we intended turnover bases, and we have been, better than we found them. And frankly, in my judgment nothing the military has done since World War II has approached this magnitude or level of complexity.

And then I'll just close with a few fast facts here. In 2008, U.S. forces resided on 505 bases. As of today, 13 October, U.S. forces are on 22 bases, each one of those bases left as good or better than we found it. And that's a reduction of 483 bases. In personnel, in 2008, there were 165,000 people here. Today on the 13th, there's a little over 41,000. And so if you do the math -- and it's not a straight line, but that means our mission would be to withdraw 520 people every day.

The other thing I wanted to highlight is, in the past we didn't have precise numbers of how many contractors we -- are supporting our forces. That has been completely turned around, and where we have now precise numbers of how many contractors so that we want to make sure that nobody gets left behind. And for the first time the number of contractors has gone below the number of military people in Iraq.

In terms of equipment, we have retrograded 1.6 million pieces of equipment since September of '10, and we have 788,000 pieces of equipment remaining, including about 23,000 wheeled vehicles. Some facts that I deal with on a daily basis, about every week we have about 13,000 trucks on the road, either delivering supplies or retrograding equipment to the various places where it goes. We deliver about 1.5 million gallons of fuel and about 964,000 gallons -- correction, 964 pounds of fuel -- 964,000 pounds of fuel per day.

You can't help look in the newspaper and you can see comment about the discussions between the U.S. government and the government of Iraq on their ongoing conversations about any request they may make for any sort of U.S. presence. And those discussions are ongoing and frankly, I'm not aware that any final decisions have been reached.

And then finally our legacy. In my view the U.S. forces and the sacrifices they've made here have provided the Iraqis with a huge opportunity to choose their own future, and we hope they choose their vision of a stable, sovereign and self-reliant Iraq.

And now I'd be glad to take your questions. Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you very much, sir. Chuck Simmins, you were on the line first.

Q: General, thank you for taking our call. Chuck Simmons from America's North Shore Journal. I want to talk trash, General. Every base had a little bit of a dump and then there were some pretty large dumps created during the U.S. presence in Iraq. What happens with those facilities and, you know, how are we cleaning up after ourselves?

GEN. SPOEHR: Sir, that's a great question. And you're exactly right. For whatever reason, modern military operations generate a fairly sizeable amount of trash and the forces here are committed to disposing of that trash and that waste in a responsible manner. So there's a number of different ways in which we have been handling that trash and we'll continue to handle it until we step across the border and leave. We now have environmental transition teams and each one of these teams, before we'll transition a base to the government of Iraq they'll have a number of different surveyors go out identifying any hazardous or regular waste areas and that we'll identify those for clean-up.

As of the 24th of September we have 362 environmental areas of concern that we have identified that we will clean up before we depart Iraq.

Some of the things we've done is we've been able to sell scrap to local Iraqis, and so about 6.8 million pounds of scrap has been sold so far in October, by October of 2011. And then we've -- oh, I'm sorry, I got that wrong. We sold 6.8 million pounds of scrap just in October '11, and since September the 1st, 2010, we have sold more than 142 million pounds of unserviceable material through scrap sales.

And then finally for those things which aren't suitable for scrap sales or for any other means of disposal, we are responsibly disposing of them in standards which we have established by Central Command because, quite honestly, Iraq has not yet developed the necessary environmental legislation and laws that you would find perhaps in the United States, and so we are obeying the regulations and the rules that Central Command has established for the responsible handling of waste.

And so as we turn over each base, it's kind of our point of pride that we're turning it over better than we found it and everything has been mitigated or remedied. Sir.

Q: Thank you.

PERRY OFFICER SELBY: And Spencer.

Q: Thanks very much. This is Spencer Ackerman with Wired. General Spoehr, what's the relationship between the pace of withdrawing the 41,000 troops that are still in Iraq and a possible request from the Iraqi government for a residual U.S. troop presence? To what degree do you have to -- or are you backloading the final 90 days worth of withdrawals to accommodate a potential request, and is there a certain date after which the Iraqis ask for more troops and it's just not feasible without actually taking troops who have sent home and then redeploying them back to the war zone?

GEN. SPOEHR: That's a great question as well, sir. We are really at this point focused on executing our reposture and transition -- and the responsible transition of these bases. And so just like any good military, we preserve as many options as we can. But obviously those options, as every day goes on, diminish in both our ability on what we could possibly have to respond to an Iraqi request for some forces to stay behind here.

I mean, I would tell you that we could, you know, almost to the end -- you know, your U.S. military is so agile and responsive that they could almost respond up until the end. And in fact, even if we withdrew all of our forces and were into Kuwait, it's not inconceivable that we could -- I mean, it does not -- it could not be ruled out that we would be already out of Iraq and be asked to return and then our U.S. government would, you know, consider that request. And so obviously with every day goes by -- and I think -- I can't remember the last time I counted how many days we have until December the 31st; I think it's less than 80 -- as every day goes on, our options and our ability to respond to such a request diminish every day as we focus on safely transitioning out of Iraq.

Q: To follow up on that, can you lay out some of the stair-step process, if that's it, to actually get troops down? You say it wasn't exactly the average of withdrawing 520 people a day. On, you know, 15 December, how many troops do you anticipate will be in Iraq, for instance?

GEN. SPOEHR: That's a great question. I think we obviously have a very deliberate plan, and we're also concerned about preserving the operational security and not giving our adversaries information that they could use to do us harm. But I think it's safe to say that we will have the vast majority of our U.S. military out of Iraq on the 15th. And so on the 15th of December, according to our plan, we're just tidying up the last few dribs and drabs of stuff.

Q: Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Dale. Actually, before we go to Dale, did somebody else join?

Q: Yes. Dan Froomkin from the Huffington Post.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thanks, Dan. Dale, you were next.

Q: Good morning, sir. This is Dale Kissinger from Militaryavenue.com. I was wondering what the sealift and airlift support you're receiving and how that's working as the joint mission to move all the folks and equipment out of Iraq.

GEN. SPOEHR: I'm sorry. I didn't quite catch the first part of your question. If you could repeat that, please.

Q: Yes, sir. Obviously the folks are being moved out, the equipment's being moved out by sealift and airlift and I was wondering how that coordination is going, and can you give me any information about that. GEN. SPOEHR: Oh, yeah. It's going wonderfully. We have -- you know, we have this team. I don't remember the exact acronym for it. It's called the CD doc, CENTCOM, and it -- so it's a -- folks of professional airlifters provided to us by USTRANSCOM, which is embedded right in U.S. Forces-Iraq. So our synchronization and our integration between the ground movement and the air movement and when we anticipate needing airlift or something like that, it's really been seamless, in my view.

And so there are great transportation folks that anticipate and are seeing when we're needing our airlift, for example out of Kuwait, and sometimes we even fly commercial folks right out of al Asad Air Base. Either one of these situations. We've really not have any significant glitches other than maintenance or weather type of delays.

Q: Thank you very much, sir.

GEN. SPOEHR: Sir.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Walter, you were next.

Q: Walter Pincus, the Washington Post. In the transfer out of equipment, can you say how much of your equipment is being turned over to the Iraqis, how much is being turned over to State, and then how much equipment is just being transferred to Kuwait and sitting there?

GEN. SPOEHR: You know, we go through a very deliberate process, sir, as you can imagine, to figure out what the ultimate disposition is of equipment. And so I mentioned we have about 788 pieces -- 788,000 pieces of equipment. Each one of these kind of gets a scrutiny in terms of cost benefit and what's the best disposition of that equipment. Obviously our first priority would be to satisfy any kind of in-theater requirements. So if there was a piece of equipment that was needed in Afghanistan to prosecute a war there, or for another military need, we would utilize that first.

And then our second priority is to make sure that the folks that will stay with the embassy under the ambassador have all the kinds of equipment they have. And let me just see if I can put my hands on the figure here. If you'd just give me a moment, please.

I'll give you another figure while I keep looking for that one. Since September the 1st, 2010, over 25,000 pieces of equipment, including vehicles and communications equipment, have been transferred under the United States equipment transfer to Iraq, and so this is a program designed to enable the Iraqi security forces -- and it's really kind of a component of foreign military sales, so there's a variety of authorities, congressional authorities we use to transfer that equipment. But over 25,000 pieces of equipment have been transferred under that program and we continue to do that in order to enable the Iraqi security forces. The foreign excess personal property program is another program that's been established, and this is really a cost savings program for the U.S. government in order to responsibly dispose of equipment which it would cost more to transport back to the United States than it would be the value of the equipment. And using that program, that foreign excess personal property equipment, or FEPP, we have saved the U.S. government and the U.S. taxpayer over \$600 million in transportation costs for equipment which is really much -- the value of it is much, much less at this point.

And I'm still looking for my figures on how much we have transferred to the Department of State.

Oh, here's another piece -- while I'm looking for that I'll give you another one. This is kind of a thing, a program that doesn't get a lot of attention, but since September 2010 we transferred over 1,100 pieces of equipment to states, states who review a list of equipment and decide that they see a piece of property there and they make a bid on it and they get to pick it up for much less than the cost of it. So for example, things like John Deere Gators, which they're getting for half price, or generators, or fire extraction kits, the Jaws of Life. I have here a thing that says that one state, and this was Louisiana, got a set of these Jaws of Life for \$10,000 and they would have retailed for \$20,000 new.

And I'll keep looking for the Department of State figures, sir. I think I have them here somewhere.

Q: If I could just follow up. You said 600 million (dollars) on the excess property on transportation. Who -- is that being sold locally? Is that being --

GEN. SPOEHR: No, sir. What -- that program by and large, that equipment remained on the bases that we transferred to the government of Iraq. And so for example, when we transfer the huge -- the large Victory Base complex, or Camp Victory, many of the containerized housing units and the air conditioners and the -- some of the generators that had been supporting the actual kind of facilities on that camp will just remain in place. And so that will allow the government of Iraq, who will at some

point sign for that base, that will enable them to really begin using that base to support their government needs.

And it also is a cost-saving measure for us because these containerized housing units, these billets are really in many cases five- or six-year-old -- they look like mobile homes. And so to transport something like that far exceeds the actual value of the house or the housing unit at this point.

Q: All right. Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you. And Dan.

Q: Yes, thank you, General. And I'm sorry I came in late; I hope I don't ask -- get too repetitive. But can you tell me if any of the major bases, like any of those -- I guess it's 11 large spaces have been turned over yet? And, you know, if not, why not? And if so, how that's gone?

GEN. SPOEHR: We count 12 large bases,

Q: OK.

GEN. SPOEHR: -- and of those 12 bases four have transferred, and I'll give you their names if you'd like them.

Q: Great, yeah.

GEN. SPOEHR: Yes, one of them is Sykes. It was up in the far north. Cobra. Also another one called Warhorse. And then most recently, yesterday, I think it was, there was a base called Morez, which is just outside of Mosul. Each one of those fits our category of a large base and each one was successfully transferred.

And the thing I'd like to highlight is these transfers, we take a very deliberate approach to them. So we -- working with the government of Iraq we ask them to identify who would they like to sign for this base. And so when that happens, they identify a person well in advance that will sign and accept responsibility for that base. And then once we have that name we coordinate with that person or that organization to conduct a series of joint inventories, and we go piece by piece, generator by generator, air conditioning unit, air conditioning unit, building by building and we go over a joint inventory of the entire base.

And then when each party is satisfied and we have our final transition, the receiving organization in most cases, in many cases the Iraqi army or a unit of the Iraqi army, will sign for that equipment and obtain -- and then they accept responsibility for that base and all the property inside of it.

One of the things that I found kind of neat was one of these bases, I think it was Warhorse, was signed for by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and so they intend to make that base a kind of a sports camp for Iraqi youth where they can maybe spend a week or so and learn to play

soccer or things like that. And so it isn't all handing them back to the Iraqi army or the Iraqi air force. The government of Iraq in some cases has kind of gone different directions and plans to give some of these bases to some of their other ministries.

Q: Now among the remaining eight, though, are the very largest bases, correct?

GEN. SPOEHR: I'm sorry, could you say that again?

Q: Among the remaining eight bases that you have not turned over yet are the very largest bases you have, correct? Like Balad and GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah, right. I think the two biggest bases we currently reside on are Joint Base Balad and the Victory Base complex in the Baghdad area. Both fairly sizeable U.S. sites and both are on track to transition as we planned.

Q: Which will be the last to go?

GEN. SPOEHR: This is one of those things where we're being kind of very discreet about which bases and our schedule for transitioning bases. And it isn't that I'm just being naturally secretive, but it's been our experience that -- we have found that as bases come near to transition, or even on their transition date, it's been our experience that our adversaries have taken advantage of what they believe is a perceived lack in our protection status and attack us on those days.

Now that isn't the case -- we remain strong until the end -- but that's been our experience that we're getting -- some of these bases have been attacked on actually their transition day. So in order to protect U.S. military folks and the supporting civilians and contractors, we've kind of chosen to keep this transition schedule under wraps, if you will.

Q: OK. And there was a GAO report that sort of warned that when you were turning over these big bases there were things that were sort of inevitably going to pop up towards the end that you hadn't expected. Has that been your experience or not?

GEN. SPOEHR: That was a great report, and frankly, I read that report, you know, cover to cover several times because there was lots of good insights in there.

First off, in my experience it was a hugely favorable report, but you're right, they did mention the fact that, you know, we -- they didn't believe that we had properly accounted for the potential that we would find a lot of stuff. Fortunately to this point that has not been our experience. So on these large bases, Sykes, Cobra, because folks before me really have gone through numerous inventories and diligently searched through containers and searched their motor pools and brought what we call it bringing to record.

So something that wasn't formally on our property books, they have brought it to record and document it. It's been our experience that

our property books versus what actually turned up needing to be retrograded, the difference was less than 5 percent.

Q: Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you, sir. And back around to Chuck.

Q: Yes. General, can you speak a little bit more about the situation in Kuwait? Mr. Pincus alluded to it. And I guess I'm wondering, you know, how -- are we just moving stuff to Kuwait? And is there, you know, a lot of it building up there? Or are we actually leaving the immediate region with much of our material?

GEN. SPOEHR: I'm glad you asked that, frankly. You probably remember the pictures after Desert Storm, where we had these huge mountains of containers and equipment that went on for miles and miles, frankly. When you go to Kuwait, you won't see that, and that's because I think we've gotten much better, the U.S. military has gotten much better at this business. And we shouldn't underestimate the value that computers have brought to this thing. So we're employing a lot better technology. And so in the past, when a container would get on a truck and go to Kuwait, they would open it in Kuwait and out would spill a multitude of things, you know. And so you'd have a pallet of Monopoly games right next to a -- you know, spare parts for a tank. And so, it would just be all jumbled. We've taken a very deliberate approach this time.

And so up in Iraq, we have segregated stuff by commodities. So we've put all the spare parts for this kind of vehicle in this kind of container and we've put all the kind of ammunition in that kind of container. And then another neat thing of technology is we've created this thing called a radiofrequency identification tag, which I think is probably the same kind of thing which keeps you from stealing a sweater from the department store.

But this kind of thing, whenever it goes by a scanner, it beeps out and it tells every place it goes by. And we have these huge scanners by the side of the road in Kuwait and Iraq that tells everybody what's going down the road. And so the long and short of it is when this stuff gets to Kuwait, they know which yard to put it in and they know which -- they don't even have to open the container or look at the shipping label to know where that should go.

And so our experience this far in Kuwait is that we're achieving a velocity that we really have thus far never seen before in military operations.

Q: Thank you, sir.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Spencer?

Q: Sort of a two-parter with this one. First, what would the expense be relative of bringing troops after they've left Iraq and Kuwait back to Iraq, just keeping some troops in Iraq following the request of

the Iraqi government. And relatedly, are there any plans post-withdrawal to hedge -- in 2012 -- to hedge against that expense by just keeping, I don't know, an A, B or other size unit in Kuwait for the prospect of returning to Iraq pending their request?

GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah. Thank you for that. You know, as you can probably intuitively guess, it would be fairly costly to leave a base, transition it and then especially if it wasn't completely well-maintained and have to move back in. Most all -- any base that we would even -- you know, if the Iraqis were to ask for a presence, we anticipate that all that presence would probably be on existing Iraqi bases.

And so making the assumption that the Iraqis -- the government of Iraq continues to maintain those sites, the expense may be fairly modest. If that assumption were not to be proven the case and we had to go back and establish a lot of what we would call infrastructure -- you know, the plumbing and the electricity and that type of thing -- that would be fairly costly.

The cost involved in getting the actual people back, not so much. But if we had to renovate and reestablish some of these items of infrastructure, that would be, you know, fairly costly. And so that's why we've been working so hard with the government of Iraq in these discussions to actually see what they were going to request.

Q: And on the prospect of any plans that exist to keep some troops in Kuwait as a hedge against the expense of bringing them back to the U.S. from home -- back to Iraq from home, sorry. Are -- do any such plans exist?

GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah. I don't -- I think we would -- you know, we would kind of want our U.S. military to get reunited with their families as quickly as we can. And so I think -- I think rather than kind of keeping people in Kuwait, we would be inclined to return them.

The real cost in military operations, frankly, has become the cost of transporting equipment. The people costs are fairly modest in comparison. And I'm not aware of any plans to keep people in Iraq only to -- you know, in the event that the Iraqis might request U.S. military forces of some kind.

Q: Thank you.

GEN. SPOEHR: You know, I'll mention one thing we're going to suggest to the Iraqis as time goes on and that is joint exercisers. You know, we conduct a number of exercises with our strategic partners. Egypt comes to mind. And so I know it's on the mind of some of the U.S. military leaders that they'd like to set up a similar exercise program with the Iraqis where we can train together and that type of thing. But I'm not aware that those are -- those plans have come along too far at this point.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: All right. And do you have time for a few more questions, sir?

GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah, I think I do. Yes, I do.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Roger that, and Dale? Q: Yes, sir. Dale Kissinger again from MilitaryAvenue.com. My question is on quality of life for the troops that are closing down shop right now. How are things going for them?

GEN. SPOEHR: It really kind of -- it's a good question. It really kind of depends on where you are in the process. So if you are on a base that is going to transition in less than, say, 20 days or so, your quality of life becomes -- we like -- the word we use is expeditionary.

And so your quality of life becomes a little more expeditionary and then in those last couple of weeks, I would even go so far as to call it austere. And so you're going to get your three square meals a day and you're going to get a shower. But the meals, you know, may not be the same kind of meals that U.S. military folks enjoy today.

So the fresh fruit may be canned or it may be a meal ready-to-eat or that kind of thing. You're going to get your meal but it will be going down. And similarly, at some point we have to turn off the mail service. And you know, mail and the U.S. military have a great relationship that goes back very long -- you know, all the way back to the Civil War people were writing letters.

But at some point in order to make sure that we don't leave mail behind or mail doesn't get misrouted, we have to cease mail service to the service members and then they'll reunite with that mail back perhaps when they get to Kuwait or maybe when they get back to home station.

But we're doing that mail thing in response to -- you know, in coordination with the U.S. Postal Service. Before someone can mail something in the States, they turn off that zip code and then that way it doesn't show up and we can't find the person that we're supposed to give it to. I'll just share a little bit with you.

One of the questions I've learned when I go visit folks -- and that's kind of what I do for General Austin is to go check on quality of life. And one of my first questions is how's the Internet. How's the Internet service here, because if you want to get -- if you want to talk about quality of life, for today's military members it quickly comes down to Internet service. They want -- that's their primary means of communication and in many cases it's their primary means of entertainment.

And so that's one of the questions I ask. Fortunately in Iraq, in most cases the U.S. government doesn't provide the Internet. It's become the province of local entrepreneurs who have reached kind of local agreements with these local sites. And so they are continuing to provide Internet service right up until the last moment. So I'm fairly confident that our service members are able to maintain contact with their loved ones almost up until the end.

I'm trying to think of other -- do you have any other specific questions about the quality of life? Q: No, I think you pretty well covered it. The communication with family so that they know what's going on and the food would probably be big ones for me.

GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah, exactly.

Q: Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Walter, did you have another question?

Q: I just wanted to pick up on one other point you raised about the adversaries taking advantage. Do you have any numbers? I mean, how many attacks have there been near transition day and what about as these -- as materials leaving, I guess they're being convoyed out. Is there any data on the number of attacks that are still taking place?

GEN. SPOEHR: Yes, sir. So in 2007 when U.S. forces were experiencing a lot of attacks, our one-day daily attack average was in the neighborhood of about 165 attacks a day. And so today our average daily attack rate hovers around 13 or 14. So more obviously than any country would want to have in their country, that number of attacks, and obviously continuing danger to Iraqi citizens and more threats than they actually deserve in their history but a significant reduction.

I don't have any by-base statistics that I can share with you other than our experience. We had some fairly significant attacks this summer and they were within 48 hours of bases closing. You probably heard about the IRAM -- the improvised rocket-assisted motor attacks. Those happened near the transition dates for those bases. So that's kind of changed the way they operate and we have -- in order to protect U.S. service members, we have kind of made it an important part to keep our base transition dates between ourselves.

MS. : This is Lt. Col. Panaro (sp). I just want to say that I'm a public affairs officer and it used to be at one time that the local units would put out a media advisory and invite local media to attend the base closures because that was seen as a sign of progress of our drawdown and keeping our promise to the Iraqis. And because of one of -- one significant attack with IRAM at Camp Loyalty, we stopped doing that.

GEN. SPOEHR: Sir, did that answer your question?

Q: When you talk about 13 or 14 a day, is that throughout Iraq and not particularly just on our bases I'm assuming? GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah, yeah, that's Iraq-wide and the causalities involved with those attacks would involve Iraqi security forces and civilians as well. And in most cases the casualties for U.S. forces are the smallest components of those attacks.

Q: Right. If I could throw one more in just on troops that are leaving, they fly to Kuwait and then home and I guess the question is

there was a period of time when you were flying some of those troops to Kuwait and then to Afghanistan. Is there any breakdown about that?

GEN. SPOEHR: That would be obviously the exception and there are -- you know, the secretary of Defense has established rules about how long service members will deploy for. And so it's normally 365 days.

So I mean, it's certainly possible that if there was a unit that was in urgent need in Afghanistan and they had time available that the secretary of Defense could -- and he would be the only one -- that he could direct them to move from Iraq directly to Afghanistan. I'm not -- I don't have any -- I've been in this job since July. I don't have any recollection of that happening since I've been here.

Q: All right. Thank you very much.

GEN. SPOEHR: Sir.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And if we have time for one more, sir?
Dan?

Q: Yeah, thank you. General, could you go over one more time -
- I'm sorry -- the numbers of equipment that you are either leaving or turning over because I've heard very different numbers from various different parts of your establishment.

I mean, one estimate was that 2.4 million pieces of equipment were being given away. So you know, breaking this up in total numbers of pieces and value and/or, you know, in the subcategories that you mentioned, the equipment transfers, the SAP and so on.

GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah. You know, giving away is not how I'd characterize it because really we're transitioning these bases back to the government of Iraq and it's our earnest wish that they continue to use these bases for the security of the Iraqi people. And so you would want to give them a base that's capable of doing that. And so that's kind of what's happening here.

And so basketball goals and things like that, but so it's really a business case decision and each one of these comes down to what would be most cost effective for the U.S. government and the taxpayer.

Does it make sense to haul this thing -- you know, and I have a figure that it takes about \$40,000 to haul a 40-foot container from the midst of Iraq all the way into the United States. And so you've got to be pretty careful about what you're going to do if you're going to commit that kind of money to haul something back to the United States. You want to make sure that when it gets there you'll have a use for it.

And so that's what we're doing. About 1.63 million items that we have retrograded since September of '10. We've got about 788,000 left to retrograde. About 31,000 items were redistributed to the Central Command area of responsibility and of those about 10,000 vehicles -- or

no, that's 10,000 vehicles in addition to that. I mentioned the state governments.

About 1,100 items, those are bulldozers and little Bobcat tractors and the Jaws of Life. About 1,100 of those have been transferred to state government, usually at about half the value that they would have had to pay for it and you can imagine how important that is to them with state budgets like they are.

And then for government of Iraq items, these are things that they've either kind of purchased or the U.S. military has declared excess and this is usually military equipment -- green military equipment about 25,000 items.

Q: And do you know what the value of those items were and what -- and how much the government of Iraq paid for any of them?

GEN. SPOEHR: Oh, I have some of that but not right in front of me. I will tell you -- you know, there is -- at least I have this conception that this was -- you know, the U.S. -- the government of Iraq usually pays at least 70 and sometimes all the cost of this foreign military equipment. And so they're essentially paying their own way in most of this foreign military sales at this stage. I think early in our relationship they were paying more. Let me just -- give me a moment here and I'll put my fingers on it here.

Q: Thank you.

Q: General, you may want to make clear that you're not talking about munitions and weapons. You're talking about nonmilitary -- nonweapon-type equipment.

GEN. SPOEHR: Well, sir, it's really kind of varied. So in this case, those items that I was talking about, some of those do include weapons in those foreign military sales. I think to date I have a number here that says the government of Iraq has implemented \$6.2 billion in foreign military sales case and you can imagine how many U.S. jobs that kind of translates to in our industrial base. Let me see what else I have here.

So some of these things we have transferred. Like we've transferred some M113 armored personnel carriers which were excess to the U.S. Army's needs. We transferred those to the government of Iraq, and so really a win-win situation for everybody because these M113s were sitting out in the middle of the desert at Sierra Army Depot in Nevada unused.

And so the Iraqi army asked for them and they paid the money to have them brought to a serviceable condition and then transported to Iraq. And so you can imagine how many jobs that generated in our depots and then shortly we're start filling these M113s to the Iraqis.

And so it's a win-win situation for both of us.

Q: So those were actually shipped from Nevada, from the U.S. to Iraq, you said?

GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah, this was -- so the M113 is a -- the word I use is venerable. That was a -- you know, it was a Vietnam-era armored personnel carrier which had kind of outlived its usefulness, was in the middle of the desert because that was the cheapest place for us to put it and then we declared it excess to our needs and the Iraqis asked for it and then paid for it to be brought to a serviceable condition and transported to Iraq for their use.

Q: OK, well that's obviously an unusual case. But about these 25,000 items that we've turned over to the government of Iraq, I mean, those include machine guns and tanks and stuff like that?

GEN. SPOEHR: I think you're right. Most of that is nonlethal kinds of stuff. It's mostly vehicles, communications equipment, forklifts, that type of thing. I'm not specifically aware that there are weapons inside of that, although there could be. I just don't -- I don't have the specific knowledge with me.

Q: Well, weren't there tanks as part of this?

GEN. SPOEHR: They have bought tanks. In fact, they have bought 140 M1A1 tanks and they actually just bought those outright.

Q: And those were the ones that were in-theater or they bought new ones?

GEN. SPOEHR: Yeah, no -- well, I don't know -- I don't think they were new but they were -- they purchased them.

Q: The thing that confused me is -- I mean, I'm used to foreign military sales being for new equipment that a government purchases. So what I didn't understand is when you guys turned over your, you know, various tanks or armed personnel carriers or Humvees or machine guns, what have you, whether those were -- whether they paid for those or not. So ones that had been property of the Army, had been used, and were now --

- GEN. SPOEHR: Right. There's a number of different ways we can do this. They can either buy new or if we declare something excess like we did with those M113s, they still have to -- we don't have the -- Congress requires us -- you know, them to pay the cost of the maintenance and the transportation. They did the same with the -- some Howitzers as well.

And so we had some Howitzers that were excess to our needs and they paid the cost to bring them up to a serviceable condition and then to transport them. Now, they're buying some new stuff too, though. So they're buying -- you probably read in the paper they're going to buy 18 F-16 jets. They're buying 35-mm patrol boats, really nice.

My aide is a Navy lieutenant and we took a tour of one of the 35-mm patrol boats. You walk up in the cockpit. It's like the bridge of the Enterprise, you know? It's just push-button and it's, frankly, very nice. So it's kind of a mixture. So I think they're being very,

frankly, frugal in what they buy and they're very deliberate in what they buy.

And so in some cases these patrol boats which they're going to use to protect their offshore oil platforms, they are sparing no expense. And then in other things where they can get a used armored personnel carrier or a used Howitzer, they're going that direction.

Q: But of those 25,000 pieces of equipment that you discussed, how many -- what was the value of those and how much did the government of Iraq pay for them?

GEN. SPOEHR: Let me see if I have that. Yeah, I do not have that piece of data. I will tell you, I talked about the -- earlier I talked about the foreign excess personal property and I need to distinguish that from these 25,000. These 25,000 pieces of equipment are ones that they've either bought or that we declared excess and they were transported to them.

Then there's this other program called the foreign excess personal property. That is the program under which we've been granted specific authority by the office of the secretary of Defense to transfer certain items which are not cost efficient to bring back to the United States. And we've transferred -- let me see if I have that number -- 3.4 million of those kinds of items to the government of Iraq.

Each one of those cases, it has to be a duly constituted representative of the government of Iraq. So it just can't be --

Q: And do you have an estimate of the value of those 3.4 million items?

GEN. SPOEHR: No, I don't have that number, sir. I thought I did but I don't. PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Did you get all that, Dan?

Q: I'm giving up, yes.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Roger that. All right. Well, with that, sir, it's been a very, very great roundtable today. If you have any closing comments, you can go ahead with those now.

GEN. SPOEHR: Well, first I want to thank you for your interest in your U.S. military. That's really kind of an exciting time to be at it. So it's a huge challenge, as I mentioned in the earlier part of this thing. We've still got about 22 sites that we need to transfer responsibly. We're going to do that. We're on track. It's a difficult environment.

Just for today, for example, we're having a fairly significant sandstorm blowing out front and so you can imagine how difficult it is to conduct a convoy in those kinds of conditions. So our plan has to be flexible enough to account for bad weather, enemy activity and then to get everybody safely out of Iraq in accordance with the 2008 security agreement.

And while we're doing all of that, it's really our intent to be responsible stewards. And I give this talk a lot about responsible stewardship everywhere I go. And so being a responsible steward means that we account for this equipment that the U.S. government has entrusted to us and make sure we do the smart thing with it in terms of its disposition. It means giving back these bases in as good or better condition than we found them.

It means making sure that we protect all the classified material because you can imagine, in the course of eight years, we've generated a huge amount of classified material. And then finally, and this is a topic I wish we had more time for, it means responsibly descoping the hundreds of contracts that we have that support us.

And so, you know, you don't want any more folks that work in the dining facility than you absolutely need to feed the service members that come through there. But on the other hand, you want everybody to get their corndog and their apple and stuff like that.

So it's really kind of a balancing act to make sure that we don't have any more capability than we need. And so, again, gentlemen, I thank you for your interest. And I look forward to our next engagement. Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you very much, sir. And thank you to everybody on the line. Today's program will be available online at DODLive.mil where you'll be able to access the story base on today's call along with source documents such as the audio file and a print transcript. Again, thank you to everybody on the line and this concludes today's event. END.